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Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVING ACCESS TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

$13.7 Million Investment Will Build Capacity Of Local Health Care Providers

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is improving access to patient care with an investment of $13.7 million to alleviate pressures in hospitals by building the capacity of community-based health care providers, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Today's announcement will improve the capacity of local health systems to provide quality care to patients in community-based settings so they are more comfortable and are closer to family and loved ones," said Smitherman. "This initiative reflects our belief that building community capacity will help hospitals respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of acute-care patients."

The government has worked collaboratively with the province's Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to develop the local solutions announced today. Today's funding is being distributed by the LHINs and will be used to:

- Increase home care and community support services
- Place additional Community Care Access Centre staff in hospitals to allow for faster access to community services for hospital patients
- Implement geriatric emergency management programs in specific hospitals to increase emergency department nursing services for seniors with complex functional and/or psychological challenges
- Fund transitional beds in select communities for patients who are awaiting placement in long-term care homes or other community-based setting

The new $13.7 million investment comes on top of $15.3 million announced last October to improve capacity of hospital emergency rooms and to enhance care in communities facing the most serious long-term care and community care pressures.

"The short-term solutions we are announcing today reflect our belief that many of the immediate challenges can be resolved through innovative and collaborative local partnerships, as we continue working on a long-term strategy to address this issue," said Smitherman.

Examples of innovative local programs that help improve the availability of hospital beds by caring for patients in the community include:

- An innovative partnership developed by Downsview Services for Seniors in Toronto, called Home At Last. A partnership between local hospitals and community support service agencies, the program helps seniors settle at home quickly and comfortably following a hospital stay and employs a coordinator to recommend community supports that ensure the patient is on the road to recovery.
- A program where residents in selected seniors' residences in Ottawa are receiving coordinated services provided by community support workers to reduce visits to the local emergency room.

Services include meals, transportation, help at home, as well as foot care. Residents are also receiving enhanced care from the local Community Care Access Centre to ensure that they receive the proper support at home to help them continue living independently.

- A Geriatric Emergency Management program which has been implemented in many communities across the province to increase emergency department nursing services for seniors with complex functional and/or psychological challenges

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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